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ABSTRACT

In linguistic analysis of the speech act, the data used to support theoretical conclusions are too often comprised of semantically isolated utterances of the ideal speaker-hearer. In reality, one of the most revealing kinds of data is imperfect data, where the functioning language processes are often unmasked. The study of first language acquisition uses it to look at language learning as an evolutionary process. The study of speech errors, the field of historical linguistics, and second language instruction also rely heavily on imperfect speech data and the successive approximations to the ideal that language learners make. Unfortunately, the study of second language learning has generally treated bilingual code-switching as malformed or substandard data when it could benefit from closer examination of the rules or constraints operative in code-switching, especially between unrelated languages. (MSE)

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CODE-SWITCHING BETWEEN NON-GENETICALLY RELATED LANGUAGES, THE CASE OF ENGLISH AND JAPANESE

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Paper presented at the International Conference on Language Teaching and Learning of the Japan Association of Language Teachers (Seirei Gakuen, Hamamatsu, Japan, Nov. 22-24, 1986)

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title: Code-Switching Between Non-genetically Related Languages, The Case of English and Japanese

Linguists are crucially concerned with explanation of the speech act. In theoretical writings, many hypothetical constructs and processes are posited which purport to do this. Unfortunately, it all too often the case that these theoretical conclusions do not take as thier basis the actual language act in all its totality. The data taken as justification for many such conclusions is often a pristine sample of isolated sentences, usually from the linguist's own competence. Perhaps this can be justified as appropriate since the goal of linguistic theory is to describe the 'competence of the ideal speaker-hearer'.

I would like here to challenge this ideal. It has been claimed that to gain access to the code underlying language, it is necessary to disregard much that goes into language. This purging of aspects which are seen as either irrelevant or as complicating factors has been called by Lyons (1972) as 'the idealization of the data'. Perhaps it is here that the theoretical linguists can gain some valuable insight from the second language teacher. The Audiolingual methodology which flourished in the 1950's and 60's, and still widely practised today, sent teachers forth into the classroom to have our students 'repeat-after-me'. What were being repeated were pristine sentences, sentences lacking a

context and in semantic isolation (and at times logical opposition) to eachother:

He bought a book.

sold: He sold a book.

car: He sold a car.

John: John sold a car.

With its firm underpinnings of the Audiolingual Methodology in descriptive linguistics and behaviourist psychology, many second language teachers were slow to correctly identify the source of inadequacies in their students' mastery of the target language. Students had of course been successful in learning what they had been taught. Unfortunately, it was not language use that was being mastered. What was being acquired was the ability to repeat sentences and although this was often done with very accurate target language phonology, there was minimal transfer of this skill into actual communicative competence. The totality of human communication goes far beyond the individual sentence.

Clearly, for the native speaker, language is not idealized sentences in isolation, and thus neither should it be so for the language teacher or the theoretical linguist. Rather than selecting, therefore, the pristine, idealized data that is part of the 'ideal speaker-hearer', we simply have to accept that since this 'ideal speaker-hearer' is a

hypothetical construct anyway, perhaps it does us no good to even imagine such an entity. That is, by positing such an entity, the field of linguistics is being both unnecessarily restricted as well as being forced to outright ignore the realities of human communication.

I would like to suggest here that one of the most revealing data categories for us as linguists is the so-called imperfect data, for it is this data where the functioning language processes are often unmasked. This indeed has been recognized by the fieldd and this is one of the reasons for the phenomenol growth in the study of first language acquisition during the past two decades. The child first language learner, in successive but overlapping stages, more and more closely approximates the adult model, and this evolution from stage to stage can elucidate the language acquisition processes. A second example of revealing 'imperfect' data is the phenomenon of speech errors. Victoria Fromkin of UCLA has written on this overlooked category and given very satisfying accounts of just how much can be explained by 'simple' slips of the tongue. Yet a third possible source of validation for linguistic theories is historical, or diachronic data. Kiparsky (1968) stated that historical linguistics was a window into the speaker's mind. Historical data does fit into this category of 'imperfect' speech as each change is a step away from the

standard speech. As with the child acquiring his first language, there is a necessity for continued restructuring, and when this happens, linguists have a peek through Kiparsky's window.

A fourth category of imperfect data comes from second language acquisition. As with first language acquisition, the change in successive approximative models can reveal the operative processes. Furthermore, even when learners are beyond the interlanguage stages and have become functioning bilinguals, their data may still be very revealing to the extent that it is not 'proper' speech .

Weinreich (1953) identified the 'ideal bilingual' with the following description:

> 'The ideal bilingual switches from one language to the other according to appropriate changes in the speech situation (interlocutors, topics etc.) but not in an unchanged speech situation, and certainly not within a single sentence.'

Although this above description may characterize the 'ideal' bilingual, the reality is that there are a good many bilinguals who simply do not fit the above description. Weinreich does admit of this possibility, but disparagingly

ascribes this to a 'neurological abnormality in a special language switching mechanism'. Hence if one is not a speech pathologist, there is little reason to study this abnormal speech. Much research, particularly within this last decade, has however argued that this mixing of two languages or, more appropriately, 'code-switching' is far more prevalent and far more interesting than Weinreich would have it.

Many bilinguals, given the appropriate social circumstance, will switch from one code to the other and back again even within the same sentence. This is not a purposeful, speech manipulation act intentionally done for play or some sort of mental stimulation. Code-switching for these bilinguals is most often a subconscious act and, as the more 'natural' form of communication, would be the obligatory form. Thus while the same sentence can be translated grammatically into language A or language B, the code-switcher will feel that only the sentence given evidence of both codes, i.e. the mixed sentence, is appropriate for a particular situation.

Attempts to investigate code-switching as a distinct phenomenon must first isolate the restrictions that exist for code-switched forms. The first restriction is that clearly the attender of the speech act must also be bilingual. The second restriction is somewhat less obvious, but is crucial

to an understanding of code-switching as a natural act or obligatory form. Code switching is done most commonly when there is a perceived psychological closeness between the two interloclutors. Thus code switching will not commonly occur in a professor-student relationship, for example, but is most often found between close friends or within the family unit (between spouses, siblings, parents and children).

Furthermore, code switching is other than the simple borrowing of lexical items. Thus the following utterances do not qualify as code-switched data:

1. I ate a lot of sushi last night.
2. Hamamatsu has been flooded with gaijin this weekend. ('foreigner')
3. He married a real ojoosan . ('princess')

Neither is it the case that one can simply switch (or translate) every nth word or any random set of words in a sentence. While this may indeed seem obvious because of conflicting grammar rules between the two languages, consider the case of counting from one to ten. While a bilingual can do so in either of two languages, it is unnatural to code-switch this number series. In fact, bilingual speakers, who code-switch normally under appropriate sociolinguistic circumstances, will find it an extremely difficult task to say every even number in Language A, but every odd number in

Language B (i.e. to use Japanese and English as the base languages: one-ni-three-shi-five-roku-seven-hachi-nine-jyu). Thus for the code-switcher, a great deal of what is possible is not acceptable.

There does seem to be a set of rules or constraints that are operative, and, in order for an individual to code-switch effectively, that person must operate within these constraints. This conclusion is inevitable from the fact that code-switchers can make acceptability judgements for specific code-switched sentences. The counting example above, for example, would be cited as unacceptable, with unacceptable being defined as not occuring. A further implication is that the code-switcher has in some manner acquired a knowledge of these constraints; that is, he has learned the code. And despite the complexity of the constraints, the code-switcher does not go through stages of acquisition dependent upon linguistically and functionally structured, simplified input as in the case of first language acquisition ('motherese') or second language acquisition ('teacher talk'). A code-switcher independently arrives at the constraints of the 'mixed system' solely on the basis of his knowledge of the two languages. Thus, radically different from all other instances of language transmission (i.e. first or second language acquisition), there is no direct or even indirect instruction in code switching. This

lack of a direct 'passing of the torch' is perhaps one of the most striking aspects of code-switching, all the more striking when it is considered that despite this lack individual code-switchers acquire or automatically achieve the same system of constraints. It would thus seem that a theory of linguistic universals could receive strong validation from an adequate description of the phenomenon of code switching.

One such constaint deals with the mixing of morphology, where a base word from one language cannot be used together with the inflectional or derivational morphology of another. Thus while the form * unshinjerable 'unbelievable' is certainly possible and decipherable, examples of lexical items having mixed morphology are not found in code-switched corpuses. In fact, it seems that most second year college students in Japanese language courses engage in word play such as this, but they recognize it as just that: a mental play exercise.

In a further attempt to elucidate the syntactic limitations on the co-occurence of 2 codes within any one sentence, consider the following utterances:

green balloon o katta

green balloon o katta, John ga

but:

*John ga a green balloon o katta

*a green balloon o katta, John ga

Notice that this data set suggests that major syntactic categories, in this case the NP, are not preserved. The English NP in the above examples obligatorily takes a determiner; in these sentences, the presence of the determiner makes them unacceptable, eventhough it is otherwise an English NP.

Further evidence for this lack of preservation of major sentence constituents, in this case the VP, is seen in the following set:

Mommy ga waiting desu kara.

*Mommy ga is waiting desu kara.

*Mommy ga wait desu kara.

The present progressive construction evidenced in the above sentences would normally obligatorily take both the 'BE' form which would also carry the tense marking as well as the 'ING' form addended to the main verb. In the code-switched, example, however, the 'BE' form cannot occur as its presence makes an unacceptable utterance. In this case, tense is not

double-marked once in each language, but is carried only by the present tense form of the Japanese copula 'desu'.

This impermissibility of double inflection is often cited as a constraint on code-switching with the evidence for this constraint being found in examples in English::Spanish code-switched data. While the Japanese::English data above, however, does seem to support this conclusion, other evidence would appear to dispute it. Consider:

1. before 10 years mae (mae = before)
2. until rainen no shichigatsu made ('until July of next year' (made = until)
3. I did yakusoku datta kara ('because I made a promise' (did and datta both carry past tense)
4. teacher was yasumi datta kara ('because the teacher was sick')

The first two cases deal with adverbial phrases of time, indicated in English by a preposition+NP and in Japanese by an NP+postposition. Despite the opposite nature of its construction (i.e prepositional vs. postpositional), the constraint against double marking is not upheld. It is as if it is precisely because of this exact opposite nature in the ordering of the constituent elements in both the English and Japanese constructions that double marking is possible. This

could also be an explanation for the third and fourth examples in this last set above as English VP's are verb initial, but Japanese are verb final. Thus there is no conflict if the double inflections are separated by at least one lexical item.

I would like to briefly conclude by returning to my central theme as to the relevance of 'bad' data. Any data that shows 2 systems in conflict (perhaps 'cooperation' would be a more appropriate term) may indeed be bad data as far as the ideal speaker-hearer is concerned, but I must insist that it is very good data for the language researcher. I would therefore like to take this opportunity to suggest that the time-honoured practice of linguistic field workers of interviewing and observing only 'trustworthy, reliable' informants who have a full command of a still vigorous language system is one-sided. No naturally occuring language data should be arbitrarily dismissed as irrelevant for linguistic analysis. Similarly, any theory of language must be capable of accounting for all such naturally occuring data. To label code-switched data as malformed or substandard is both wrong as well as shortsighted and a thorough investigation of such data, particularly between two nongenetically related languages such as English and Japanese, should prove to be especially illuminating.

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